
Letters to the Editor

From David Johnson

[Extract from a private letter to the editor of *Tempo* from the Scottish composer and musicologist, not originally intended for publication, but printed here with his permission.]

[...] Here are some thoughts re articles in the recent issues of *Tempo* (220 and 221). They're to do with post-modernism and its tendency to quote from, refer to, or re-write, the great classical music of the past.

The ingredient which I feel is missing from the argument is something I put forward in *Music & Society in Lowland Scotland* (start of ch.5): that classical music 'is an art which evolves continuously and ruthlessly – one period hardly reaches maturity before it's undermined and superseded by the next'. From this viewpoint, the classical masterpieces of the past are not firm entities, cast in gold, unattainable, to be worshipped from afar, a matter for nostalgia. They were produced under hellish, competitive conditions. The best work was often misunderstood by critics, turned down by publishers, wrecked by vain, stupid soloists. The tradition has vast numbers of loose ends: the ideas that Bach could have put into his cello suites nos. 7-12, if he'd written them ... the formal structures that Beethoven would have developed if he'd lived longer, which were dropped by the wayside in the changed fashions after 1820 ... I could go on.

So if one doesn't like 100%, wall-to-wall modernism, why not treat the past as alive instead of dead, and start picking up these loose ends?

My own work (I am experienced at flirtations with past periods) seems to score on two things which most people would see as disadvantages, even disqualifications for my being in this line of work at all. (1) My composition technique is lousy. I couldn't write pastiche Mahler to save myself, I'd get it a bit wrong (e.g. by putting in Scottish double-tonic sequences) and it would come out sounding like me, not like Mahler. (2) I'm ignorant. There are lots of Bach's '48' I don't know, I've never heard the Diabelli Variations, or two-thirds of Bartók... so that I'm liable to go to concerts and make discoveries, saying

naively 'How's he done that – what technique is he using?', in the present tense. In that way the past isn't dead, it's here now. [...]

8 Shandon Crescent
Edinburgh EH11 1QE

From Mark R. Taylor

If the editor is prepared (perhaps in addressing the going-AWOL of Michael Graubart's Ex.G3 [letter, *Tempo* 221]) to consider the Schoenberg analysis correspondence not yet closed, may I be permitted a brief belated observation on Ex.4 of Mark Doran's original, invaluable article (*Tempo* 219)?

Not wishing to pre-empt the hinted-at Keller-style 'Functional Analysis' from him (an enticing prospect!) which he concedes would encompass rhythmic considerations, but is it worth remarking, pro tem., (and given Mr Graubart's returning to the 'metric and agogic') that while in *pitch* terms the salient relationship between c) and f) is the exact *inversion*, the *rhythm* of f) compared to c) has more than a breath of the *retrograde* about it?

40, Underwood Street
London N1

'More true Relationships' – a Correction

As several readers have noticed, Michael Graubart's important letter on Verklärte Nacht ('More True Relationships', *Tempo* 221, pp.37-39) was disfigured by a mix-up with his music examples: as printed, his Ex.G3 was omitted while Ex.G1 was repeated in its place. Investigation has revealed that the correct examples were in place on the initial page make-up and the substitution happened on the final page proof; but regardless of how this occurred it should have been noticed before the issue went to press, and Mr Graubart is owed an apology for a slip which made it impossible properly to follow that part of his argument.

The relevant portion of his letter should have read as follows, with the correct example this time:

But the violin line is *not* harmonized as in Ex.G2. It is harmonized as in Ex.G3, and in E major:



Ex.G3

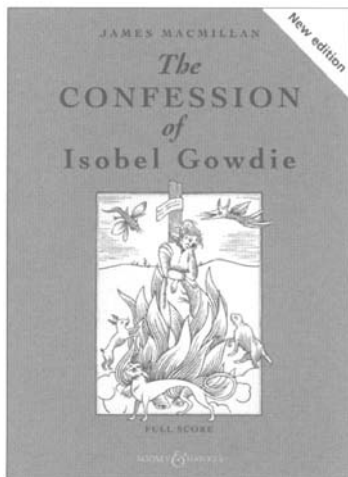
The E major tonic pedal makes it clear that the diminished-seventh chord above it on the first two beats of each bar is an appoggiatura: it resolves to a triad of E, not B. The A# 'points' to its *implied* resolution, B, and this again becomes aurally *explicit* at the end of the bar. It is the function of the A# as an appoggiatura that relates Ex.G3 to Ex.G1 – and the relationship is that of parallelism, not the complementary one of antecedent to consequent.

Tempo 221 Erratum

On p.64 of the July issue, in the course of a record review devoted to the music of Hugh Wood, Calum MacDonald remarked that *Scenes from Comus* showed 'it was Wood who arrived first at much that would recur in Maw's *Scenes and Arias*'. Nicholas Maw's publishers have gently reminded us that *Scenes and Arias* was first performed at the Proms in 1962; *Scenes from Comus* in 1965. Although the published form of *Scenes and Arias* dates from 1966, there is no question that it was the earlier work, and MacDonald's remark, inadvertently made, is in error. Apologies are due to both composers.

Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Limited

James MacMillan



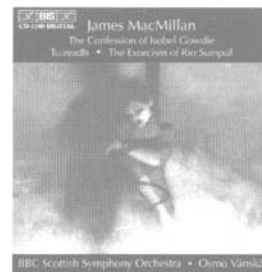
New Publication

The Confession of Isobel Gowdie 26'
for orchestra
Computer set edition
Full score M-060-11337-6 / £27.50

New Disc

The Confession of Isobel Gowdie / Tuireadh / The Exorcism of Rio Sumpúl

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Osmo Vänskä
BIS CD 1169



For further information on MacMillan's music, visit our website at www.boosey.com/MacMillan

BOOSEY & HAWKES

295 Regent Street, London W1R 8JH Tel: 020 7580 2060 www.boosey.com
